Party climate action plans fall short, analysis finds

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Body

None of the major federal parties has a plan to ensure Canada pulls its weight in the global fight to avoid catastrophic climate change, a sobering new analysis concludes.

Published Tuesday in Policy Options magazine, the analysis by University of British Columbia climate scientist Simon Donner looks at reductions in greenhouse gas emissions each major party has promised during the current federal election campaign.

He compares them with a projection for how steeply Canada needs to slash emissions to do its fair share in keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century - the best-case goal of the international Paris Agreement.

The conclusion: none of the parties has promised to go far enough.

"These results paint a stark picture. Despite lofty claims and aspirational goals, there is no Canadian plan consistent with avoiding 1.5 degrees C or 2 degrees C warming," Donner writes.

"Wherever you are on the political spectrum, the rhetoric of your party on climate change does not match the numbers."

The 1.5-degree threshold has been held aloft by activists and scientists as the upper limit of acceptable global warming, especially since a bombshell report in October 2018 from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

That report offered a stark and urgent call to action, describing the "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" that are needed to slash global greenhouse gas emissions.

The world has until 2030 to drop emissions by 45 per cent, the IPCC concluded, and must find a way to effectively eliminate them by the middle of this century.

Failure to do so could bring about the calamitous consequences of runaway climate change, the report says, including widespread extinctions, an Arctic without sea ice, the disappearance of coral reefs, rising sea levels and more frequent and extreme weather.

With that in mind, Donner calculated Canada's remaining "budget" for future emissions based on its approximate share of the global population (0.5 per cent).

Then he calculated the depth of emissions reductions over the coming decades that would align with giving the world 2-to-1 odds of keeping warming below 1.5 degrees.

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